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Delicacy of touch and charm are the salient points of Eastman Johnson's agreeable "Portrait of a Lady," which shows this sterling painter in an unusual light. John Sargent's well-known qualities will attract many to his portrait of Robert Louis Stevenson, and to the brilliant sketch of Edwin Booth, made for the well-known portrait now in the Players Club.

All of these paintings have been placed in Gallery 12, with certain others belonging to the Museum—two by George Fuller, called "Nydia" and "And She was a Witch;" "The African Sentinel," by Vedder; "The Spanish Girl," by Allston; and several portraits.

### THE CLEANING OF THE MUSEUM PAINTINGS

IT is not the intention of the Trustees of the Museum to use the Bulletin, or to allow others to use it, for controversial purposes, its object being to keep the friends of the Museum informed with regard to acquisitions which are received, and work which is being accomplished in the several departments. But an attack has recently been made upon one of the officials of the Museum of so serious a nature that it cannot be ignored. This is an article which appeared in the May number of the *Academy Notes* of the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, written by Dr. Charles M. Kurtz, director of the Albright Gallery, criticizing Mr. Roger E. Fry, our curator of paintings, for his method of cleaning some of the pictures in the Museum. As the article in question was quoted at length in one of the New York papers, a reply to it, in the form of an interview with Mr. Robert W. de Forest, the Secretary of the Museum, was at once published, and is here reprinted for the information of those who may not have seen it:

I regret that Mr. Kurtz, before giving any article to the press, should not have made inquiry among the officers or trustees of the Metropolitan Museum. Had he done so, he would have found that the criticism of Mr. Fry's methods of cleaning had already been thoroughly investigated by the Board of Trustees. Mr. Roger E. Fry is absent abroad. Inasmuch as these charges, if sustained, would reflect upon his fitness to occupy the position of curator of paintings in the Museum, which he now holds, it seems just to him as well as to the Museum that the result of the inquiry made by the Trustees should be known.

In the opinion of Dr. Charles M. Kurtz, the "Holy Family," by Rubens, has been ruined by Mr. Fry's cleaning. According to Dr. Kurtz,

"not only the original varnish has been removed, but considerable of the original color seems to have gone with it." Let me say that Dr. Kurtz is not the only one who has been disturbed by the change in the appearance of the picture since it was cleaned. Covered as it had been with successive coatings of varnish and dirt, which concealed previous restorations, and altered or disguised its original colors, it had certainly acquired a different tone from that which it now presents, and which Mr. Fry and other judges believe to be much nearer the original. However, the matter was brought to the attention of the Trustees at their April meeting, and by their order the Director and Assistant Director were instructed to make an investigation into Mr. Fry's treatment of this and other pictures in the Museum, and report thereon in writing. Following these instructions, Sir Purdon Clarke and Mr. Robinson proceeded to make a careful inquiry, and their report was submitted last week to the Board, by whom it was accepted and adopted. Their conclusion was that they had not found in any of the pictures treated by Mr. Fry that the original paint was in any way affected, and they expressed the opinion that the work had been done with great skill and knowledge, and without any injury to the pictures. It may be of interest to repeat *in extenso* what they said about the Rubens:

"The cleaning of this picture was undertaken because it was found to have successive layers of varnish upon it, forming a heavy coating which was much discolored, and which had not only darkened the picture very considerably, but, as was subsequently proved, had even changed the effect of the color in several important places, the dress of the Madonna appearing green instead of gray, the latter being its original color, to which it has now been brought back. When Mr. Fry examined this picture, he found three spots in the sky above the head of Saint Francis, where the paint had peeled. Fearing that more might crack off if it were rubbed too much, he decided to remove the varnish with the use of alcohol, a decision which he reached after making several experiments. The alcohol was applied with the greatest care, and with the constant application of linseed oil as a deterrent, to prevent its going too far or acting too quickly. In no case was the original paint uncovered by the use of the alcohol. It should be noted, however, that in several spots the varnish was slightly scraped, not dissolved, in order to test its thickness. The whitish lights on the body of the Christ Child showed with sharp outlines as the varnish upon it was lightened, but absolutely no paint or color was removed. As a result of the cleaning, several former restorations were brought out. Some of these Mr. Fry left untouched, as for example, the head of the Virgin and a part of her overdress. One—curious brush-strokes, by the elbow of Saint Joseph—was slightly glazed over to reduce its prominence, while others were completely uncovered and repainted. These are a large spot in the dark shadow to the right of the Virgin's overdress, where the canvas had been torn and patched; a vertical tear at the top of the canvas, above the head of the Virgin; and small spots in the landscape, in the Virgin's neck, in the arm of the Child, etc. These spots were all small, and had been filled by some previous restorer; but in no case has the original paint been

retouched or restored either by Mr. Fry or under his direction, except around the edges of the repairs or restorations. After its cleaning the picture was thinly revarnished with a diluted mastic varnish."

The report upon the other pictures which had been cleaned by Mr. Fry showed an equally careful examination of details, and the conclusion reached was that stated above, namely, that no injury had been done to any of the pictures by the treatment to which they had been subjected. This conclusion has since been confirmed by others competent to judge of the matter, among whom I may cite Mr. Frederick Dielman, president of the National Academy, who writes to Mr. Robinson:

"Having read the report made by the Director and yourself to the Board of Trustees, dated April 30, 1906, and having made, as requested, a careful examination of the paintings referred to in the same, restored and now on exhibition, I beg to say that in my judgment the present condition of these paintings fully confirms the statement made in your report as the result of your investigations; and that I concur entirely in your finding and opinion."

That the writer of the article in the *Academy Notes* has been deceived in his judgment as to what has been done to the pictures in the Museum is best evidenced by what he says of two of them. Manet's "Boy with the Sword" he finds to have been varnished so that it "has the appearance of a newly polished shoe." When it was in the Albright Art Gallery a year ago "it was in superb condition," but to-day it is "not what it was then." As a matter of fact, nothing whatever has been done to the picture either recently or, so far as any one here can remember, since it came into the possession of the Museum, except that when it was hung in its present position the glass was removed on account of the reflection that it cast. And the same is true of Van der Meer's "Young Woman Standing by a Window." This, he says, has "suffered at some time" from cleaning, and the "harmony of its former rich coloring no longer exists." If he remembers the picture with anything but its present coloring, his recollection must be of a time before it came to the Museum, for nothing has been done to it since, except that the glass was removed this spring.

It is not for me to comment upon the wisdom of publishing judgments formed as these appear to have been, without conference with our Director or Assistant Director, with whom I have every reason to suppose Dr. Kurtz has friendly relations. I am concerned only with the facts in the case. But from this point of view I cannot close without a word in regard to the writer's characterization of Mr. Fry as possessing "enthusiasm apparently unmitigated by knowledge or experience." Had this description been true, Mr. Fry would never have been called into the service of our Museum. That his reputation for knowledge is high in Europe is perhaps best proved by the strong pressure which was brought upon him to persuade him to accept the directorship of the National Gallery in London last winter, the highest position to which any Englishman of his profession can aspire; and that his experience and skill as a restorer are appreciated by connoisseurs in this country outside of the Metropolitan Museum needs no other evidence

than the fact that such a careful and discriminating collector as Mr. John G. Johnson, of Philadelphia, has intrusted to him some of his most valuable and delicate pictures. Of his work, Mr. Johnson says, in a recent letter:

"Mr. Fry, in addition to his extraordinary all-round knowledge of matters of art, not confined to paintings, is an artist, and most thoroughly informed as to all matters connected with what I may call the physique of a painting. Some years ago he restored a Giovanni Bellini now belonging to me, which required the highest skill in restoration. His work was done most admirably, and the painting has not disclosed the slightest evidence of anything done to it which injured it. It was very greatly improved by the work. . . . In no way would I be apprehensive of ill-results attendant upon confiding to his care a work of art of the very greatest value"

### MR. GEORGE A. HEARN'S RECENT GIFT TO THE MUSEUM

MR. HEARN'S letter of January 11th, proffering his generous gift of paintings and endowment fund has already been printed in the Bulletin. Accompanying that letter was another letter explaining why he had modified his original offer of December 18, 1905. This letter is a clear expression of Mr. Hearn's views with regard to the arrangement of pictures and other objects of art in museums, particularly in connection with conditional gifts, and is here reproduced as an interesting contribution to these subjects:

To the Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

GENTLEMEN:

Objection having been raised to the condition accompanying my offer of pictures and money to the Museum, I deem it but due to myself to offer justification therefor.

It having been said that it is difficult to meet the demand that gifts of paintings be kept together permanently, because such collections represent different nationalities and periods, I would reply, that while such difficulty might arise where the gifts number a dozen or so, it cannot be true where an entire gallery is harmoniously filled from a definite standpoint, for then the collection becomes a unit, or let us say, a small Museum in itself; the separate works contained therein holding consistent relation to each other, completing the roundness of the whole.

This collection is not simply a number of unrelated pictures that happened to please the fancy, brought to the Museum from the walls of my home; on the contrary, it is a collection formed in the gallery where it now hangs, during a number of years, having been subjected to frequent changes, always with improvement, and, by consent and approval of the authorities, until the present harmony was secured. To scatter these paintings through different rooms would be to undo the result I have desired to attain, and the artist or art lover will find nothing in Gallery 15 to interfere